



**ARCHULETA
COUNTY**
COLORADO



Forest Service
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

A Joint Fact Sheet by Archuleta County and San Juan National Forest Pagosa Ranger District | February 2023

Proposed Forest Road 738 Gravel Pit

Archuleta County and the Pagosa Ranger District consider a gravel pit option

Archuleta County has identified a need for a local source of gravel. The County identified and tested the area off Forest Road 738, which they found to contain hard, durable rock appropriate for gravel. This gravel pit would provide a local source of material for use on County and Forest Service roads. The proposed gravel pit will be analyzed in the same Environmental Assessment as the other projects being proposed in the Jackson Mountain area, but a separate decision will likely be written for the gravel pit. Effects of a potential gravel pit will be considered when addressing safety, recreation, and resource protection for the Jackson Mountain landscape area.



A scree field comprises the site of the proposed 738 gravel pit

Why do we need gravel?

Archuleta County Road and Bridge and the Pagosa Ranger District currently have no local sources for gravel. County and Forest roads are often surfaced with gravel to keep them open and passable to the public and to complete projects on the landscape. Archuleta County maintains over 300 miles of dirt roads. The County uses gravel for paved road shoulders, as pavement sub-base, and for road maintenance for gravel roads. Due to the absence of

local gravel pits and the cost of obtaining it from a distance, the County has a maintenance backlog and is only adding gravel to the worst roads and major roads, such as CR 500 and CR 600. The cost of transporting gravel is far reaching and also directly impacts construction projects. The cost of hauling gravel exacerbates building costs and makes it more difficult to develop affordable housing. Archuleta County is the home to numerous recreational opportunities from boating on Navajo Reservoir to amazing trails to be hiked or biked. In order to create additional recreational opportunities, the County will need to have the ability to provide the associated infrastructure and maintenance to include roads, which must include access to affordable gravel.

The Pagosa Ranger District has over 400 miles of open National Forest System roads. These roads provide access to both public lands and private in-holdings within Archuleta, Hinsdale, and Mineral Counties. Virtually every activity that takes place on the District uses the road system, including outdoor recreation, wildfire management, livestock grazing, vegetative management operations, electronic communication site and utility corridor maintenance, private in-holdings access, as well as the management and monitoring of public lands. The development of local sources of gravel will help the Forest Service properly maintain the existing road system, thus continuing to provide reasonable access to San Juan NF lands for the activities described above. “Native surface” roads, or roads where no surface material has been applied, deteriorate quickly and are often rutted and impassable without high clearance or 4x4. By applying gravel, engineers create a hardened surface that prevents rutting,

slumping, and even sliding, all of which damage vegetation and cause sedimentation in waterways. The main road in the Jackson Mountain landscape was last resurfaced in 2009/10 and secondary roads haven't been resurfaced in over 30 years. Gravel resurfacing is effective for 10-12 years, meaning this deferred maintenance is impacting recreationists, hunters, and other Forest visitors. Increased activity in the area, whether due to a rise in recreation use or the forest restoration and fuels reduction work, means road resurfacing will be imperative.

Why Jackson Mountain?

Archuleta County and the San Juan NF have considered multiple locations for a gravel pit. The proposed 738 gravel pit location is being considered because it provides the quantity and quality of gravel needed in a centralized location. Wildlife officials have indicated the proposed pit location is more desirable than others originally considered due to lessened impacts on wildlife migration corridors.

Gravel Characteristics

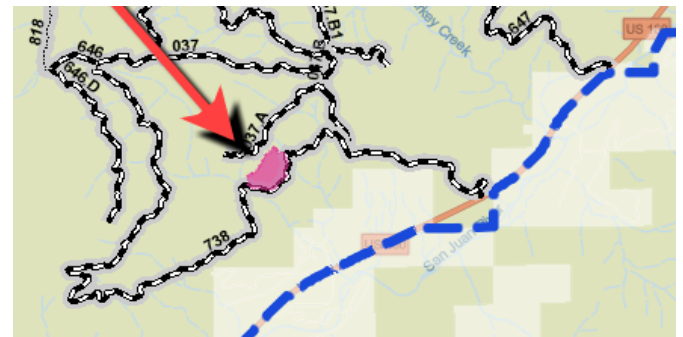
Testing conducted by Archuleta County found that the proposed 738 gravel pit location contains the most desirable type and quality of rock of the locations analyzed. The rock hardness classification and the depth of the product both determine whether the location and product are suitable. Other sites evaluated were determined to be of lower quality material in less-desirable locations.

Location

The proposed gravel pit location is centralized and close to project needs. There are currently two gravel pits in the County: one near Arboles and one near the New Mexico Border, with a life expectancy of under five years and two years respectively. Hauling gravel costs roughly \$150/hour per truck, so location is important to keep costs to the public low. The County and San Juan NF have spent several million dollars in the past three years to source and haul gravel in the Pagosa area—an expense that could be drastically reduced by the presence of a local pit.

The proposed pit would be located on San Juan National Forest land, off Forest Road 738. The San

Juan River Village subdivision is located between Forest Road 738 and Highway 160, with 241 homes of which 33% are short term rentals and others occupied part-time.



The location of the proposed 738 gravel pit is off Forest Road 738 northeast of Pagosa Springs in the Jackson Mountain area.

Requirements for Operations

If the pit is permitted, the State of Colorado will require dust mitigation as well as air and water monitors. The Forest Service will also likely have additional requirements that will be outlined and analyzed as part of the current process. These will be documented in the Environmental Analysis that will be released for public comment upon completion.

Public Comment Period is Open

The first formal opportunity for public comment is the 45-day scoping period, which will run from January 10, 2023 to February 23, 2023. The initiation of the scoping period formally begins the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) process. Comments received during scoping will help the Forest Service refine the proposed action and alternatives to the proposed action and identify environmental issues that need further analysis in the Environmental Assessment (EA). Electronic input is preferred and can be submitted via an on-line comment form: <https://tinyurl.com/ysrpubm7>

Hardcopy input can be mailed via United States Postal Service or sent via courier (UPS/FedEx) to:

Pagosa Ranger District – Jackson Mountain project
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